



UNITED STATES SENATOR ★ SERVING THE CITIZENS OF IDAHO

LARRY CRAIG

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NEWS RELEASE

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CRAIG: WILD FIRES IMPACTING OUR CLIMATE

Hearing misplaces cause and effect

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Idaho Senator Larry Craig called attention today to the impact wildland fires are having on the global environment in a hearing by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. The hearing examined the “Impacts of Global Climate Change on Wildfire Activity in the U.S.”

As a member of the committee, Craig took the opportunity to point out the apparent chicken-egg scenario at play – do wildfires cause climate change, or does climate change cause wildfires?

“Fires in Idaho will emit more than 12 million metric tons of CO₂ this year, compared to only 700,000 metric tons from our electricity generation, or 8.6 million metric tons from all of our automobile use,” Craig said. **“Wild fires in this country this year released the same amount of greenhouse gases as 12 million automobiles. Preventing fires through active management is certainly more feasible and cost effective than asking 12 million people not to drive.”**

On average, one acre of burning forest releases six tons of CO₂. To date, roughly 8.4 million acres have burned in the U.S., meaning that over 50 million tons of CO₂ has been released into the atmosphere. That’s the equivalent of 12 million vehicles on the road for one year.

Senator Craig, also a member of the appropriations committee, called for a commitment to spending more on preventative forest management policies, noting that **“the U.S. spends only \$600 million to manage forests and \$2 billion to fight fires. If we spent more of our resources on managing and thinning we’d likely not spend so much fighting fires. We’d also be reducing the amount of greenhouse gases from fires, and increasing the amount of CO₂ sequestered by healthy trees.”**

Craig pushed for the active management of our nation’s forests to significantly reduce the numbers of acres burned each year, which in turn would prevent significant emissions of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Craig said, **“Forest fires of the magnitude of this year’s fires in Idaho and in other Western States emit massive quantities of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Actively managing forests can lead to a 50 to 60 percent reduction in the numbers of acres lost to wildfires each year. Preventing the forests from burning also ensures that we maintain the forests for the consumption of carbon dioxide from other sources.”**